

# PM reaffirms commitment to upholding Asean cohesion

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has reaffirmed Malaysia's commitment to Asean cohesion and constructive engagement with regional partners amid complex geopolitical challenges and growing concerns over cross-border repression.

In an interview with Al Jazeera's *101 East*, released on Thursday on the channel's YouTube platform, Anwar stressed the importance of Asean remaining united as the region faces mounting pressure from major powers and intensifying trade tensions.

"We have been quite cohesive. I think we need to strengthen that bond together in this changing geopolitical environment.

"The focus is on intra-trade, investment and taking a common position vis-a-vis the big powers and our neighbours," he said during the interview with senior journalist Mary Ann Jolley.

The Prime Minister also described Malaysia's relations with neighbouring countries as "excellent" and emphasised that many regional issues are best resolved through direct personal engagement.



He reiterated that Asean centrality must remain a core guiding principle as the region navigates new global trade dynamics, including tariff policies that could impact member states, Bernama reported.

While acknowledging that tariff changes, particularly from the United States, could adversely

affect Malaysia, the Prime Minister said: "If we can secure Asean unity and cohesion, we may be able to slightly mitigate the impact."

Malaysia currently holds the Asean chairmanship for 2025.

On the issue of cyberscams operating out of South-East Asia, including Cambodia, Anwar said that Asean has stepped up collaboration to tackle transnational crime.

He also dismissed claims that the Cambodian government is complicit in the scam industry, despite critical reports from

international watchdogs.

"We now have more proactive engagements within Asean on cybersecurity and transnational crimes.

"We are working towards establishing common rules," he added.

He also said Malaysia continues to maintain close and effective cooperation with "Cambodian authorities, which he described as "unrivalled".

Anwar said he would raise any new concerns directly with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet.